

Amendments to the Claims:

A clean version of the entire set of pending claims including amendments to the claims, is submitted herewith per 37 CFR 1.121(c)(3). This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1-2. (Canceled)

3. (Currently Amended) ~~Ballast according to claim 2~~ A ballast for operating a low-pressure mercury vapor discharge lamp having two luminescent portions each radiating in a different color, said ballast comprising:

AC supply means for supplying an AC current to the lamp, said AC means comprising a half-bridge converter; and

DC supply means for simultaneously supplying a DC current to the lamp, said DC supply means having means for changing at least one of an intensity and a direction of said DC current, wherein the DC supply means (40) comprise a switch (41, 42) connected in parallel with one of the capacitors (Cb1) a capacitor of the half-bridge converter, such that when the switch (41, 42) is closed the capacitor (Cb1) is shunted.

4. (Currently Amended) ~~Ballast according to~~ The ballast of claim 3, wherein said parallel connection is provided with an impedance (Z_{DC}).

5. (Currently Amended) ~~Ballast according to~~ The ballast of claim 4, wherein said impedance (Z_{DC}) is a variable impedance.

6. (Currently Amended) ~~Ballast according to~~ The ballast of claim 3, wherein the switch is a bi-polar switch (41), and the switch is connected in parallel with the a second capacitor (Cb2) of the half-bridge over the a second pole of the switch, such

that when the switch (41) is closed onto the second pole the second capacitor (C_{b2}) is shunted.

7. (Currently Amended) ~~Ballast according to~~ The ballast of claim 6, wherein the switch (41) has a third neutral position, wherein the first and second capacitors (C_{b1}, C_{b2}) are not shunted.

8. (Currently Amended) ~~Ballast according to~~ The ballast of claim 3, wherein the DC supply means (40) comprise a second switch (43) connected in parallel with the a second capacitor (C_{b2}) of the half-bridge converter, such that when the second switch (43) is closed the second capacitor (C_{b2}) is shunted.

9. (Currently Amended) Ballast according to claim 8, wherein the two switches (42, 43) are electronically controlled switches, being capable of operating independently of the electronically controlled switches (31, 32) of the half-bridge converter.

10. (New) An apparatus, comprising:
a low-pressure mercury vapor discharge lamp having two luminescent portions each radiating in a different color; and
a ballast comprising,
AC supply means for supplying an AC current to the lamp, and
DC supply means for simultaneously supplying a DC current to the lamp, said DC supply means having means for changing the intensity and/or direction of said DC current.

11. (New) The apparatus of claim 10, wherein the means for supplying the AC current comprise a half-bridge converter.

12. (New) The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the DC supply means comprise a switch connected in parallel with a capacitor of the half-bridge converter, such that when the switch is closed the capacitor is shunted.

13. (New) The apparatus of claim 12, wherein said parallel connection is provided with an impedance.

14. (New) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein said impedance is a variable impedance.

15. (New) The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the switch is a bi-polar switch, and the switch is connected in parallel with a second capacitor of the half-bridge over a second pole of the switch, such that when the switch is closed onto the second pole the second capacitor is shunted.

16. (New) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the switch has a third neutral position, wherein the first and second capacitors are not shunted.

17. (New) The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the DC supply means comprise a second switch connected in parallel with a second capacitor of the half-bridge converter, such that when the second switch is closed the second capacitor is shunted.

18. (New) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the two switches are electronically controlled switches, being capable of operating independently of the electronically controlled switches of the half-bridge converter.